CLAIMS

1. A method to detect and reward the return of shopping carts to the collection points provided for them at a shopping center, wherein during the purchase a first signal A and when the shopping cart is returned to a collection point a second signal B is generated, and wherein the two signals A and B are correlated to issue a bonus, comprising;

assigning the first signal A to a certain customer by identifying or individualizing the customer when generating the first signal A and/or by the customer carrying with him on an information medium the generated signal A until it is correlated with the second signal B.

2. A method according to claim 1, further comprising

generating the second signal B when any shopping cart is returned to a collection point.

3. A process according to claim 2, further comprising

only generating the second signal B when the returned shopping cart had previously been located outside of the collection point for longer than a preset time period.

4. A process according to one of claims 2 or 3, further comprising

only generating the second signal B when the shopping cart had been previously used to go shopping.

5. A method according to claim 4, further comprising

the customer identifying or individualizing himself in the shopping center at the generation of the first signal A, so the identity of the shopping cart used for a purchase is recognized or the shopping cart is given the first signal A, and generating the second signal B is if the shopping cart used for a purchase is returned, wherein the correlation of signals A and B is done in the shopping center and the customer is credited through an individual account.

6. A method according to one of claims 1 through 4, wherein

the customer is individualized using optical recognition systems.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein

the customer is re-recognized to generate signal B using an optical recognition system.

8. A method according to one of claims 1 through 4, further comprising

issuing the information medium for the first signal A to the customer when paying at the shopping center and recording the second signal B on it, when returning a shopping cart whereby the customer receives a bonus when returning the information medium with the recorded second signal B.

9. A method according to one of claims 1 through 4, further comprising

issuing the information medium to the customer when he drives into the customer parking lot of the shopping center, recording the first signal A when he pays at the shopping center, and recording the second signal B when he returns a shopping cart, and the customer receiving a bonus when returning the information medium when he leaves the customer parking lot if the first signal A and the second signal B are recorded on the information medium.

10. A method according to one of claims 1 through 4 or 6 through 7, wherein the signals A and B are saved on a customer-owned data medium.

11. A method according to claim 10, wherein

the signals A and B are linked in the customer-owned data medium.

12. A method according to claim 10, wherein each of the signals A and B are stored together with a time stamp on the customer-owned data medium, they are read out when the next purchase is made and are correlated to issue of a bonus at the shopping center.

13. A method according to one of claims 10 through 12, wherein signals A and B are saved on the customer-owned data medium with codes or addressing specific to the shopping center.

14. A method according to one of claims 10 through 13, wherein signals A and B are also saved in the shopping center.

15. A method according to one of claims 1 through 14, wherein signal A contains, in addition to information that a purchase was made, data on the scope, the makeup and/or the time point of the purchase, and the bonus to be given out to the customer is determined in relation to such data.

16. A system to carry out the method according to one of claims 1 through 15, comprising first detection means (5) to generate a first signal A during the purchase and second detection means (7) to generate a second signal B when a shopping cart (1) is

returned to a collection point (6), and a data processing unit to correlate the two signals A and B to issue a bonus,

the first detection means (5) is for identifying or individualizing a particular customer or an information medium carried by him when generating the first signal A.

17. A system to carry out the process according to one of claims 1 through 5, comprising first detection means (5) for generating a first signal A during the purchase and second detection means (7) for generating a second signal B when a shopping cart (1) is returned to a collection point (6), and a data processing unit to correlate the two signals A and B to issue a bonus, wherein

an information medium is provided to be carried by a particular customer to save the first signal A until it is correlated with the second signal B.

18. A system according to claim 16, wherein

the first detection means (5) is provided with an optical recognition system to identify or individualize a particular customer.

19. A system according to claim 18, wherein the second detection means (7) is provided with an optical recognition system to identify or individualize a particular customer.

20. A system according to claim 16 and/or 17, wherein

the information medium is a data medium in the permanent possession of the customer.

21. A system according to claim 16 and/or 17, wherein

the information medium is a customer-owned mobile telecommunication means, in particular a mobile phone (13).

22. A system according to claim 16 and/or 17, wherein

the second detection means (18) further includes means for recognizing whether the returned shopping cart (1) has been stored into the shopping cart stacked row provided at the collection point (6) within a prescribed tolerance.

23. A system according to claim 17, wherein

the first detection means (5) includes an optical signal transmitter (15) located in the shopping center and the second detection means includes a second optical signal transmitter (18) at the collection point (6), and a number of optical detectors (17) that cooperate with the first and the second signal transmitters (15, 18), said detectors being attached to the shopping carts (1) and being provided for the generation of signals A and

B as well as for forwarding the signals A and B to the customer-owned information medium.

24. A system according to claim 23, wherein

the optical detectors (17) are provided with a read-write device (24) to write the customer-owned data medium which comprises a chip card (25).

25. A system according to claim 23, wherein

a wireless forwarding of signals A and B to the customer-owned data medium is provided.

26. A system according to one of claims 23 through 25, wherein

at least one of the first and/the second optical signal transmitter (15, 18) are made up of IR light sources.

27. A system according to one of claims 23 through 25, wherein

the first optical signal transmitter (15) comprises a light signal (16) that is modulated according to normal lighting of the shopping center.

28. A system according to one of claims 23 through 25 or 27, wherein

the second optical signal transmitter (18) comprises a light signal (19) that is modulated according to the normal lighting of the collection point (6).